

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00001R000100090017-0
JUN 9 1965

They All Say, 'Yes, Lyndon'

FOIA b3b

CPYRGHT

BY JAMES MCCARTNEY

WASHINGTON — President Johnson reports he had 237 individual conversations and "about 35 meetings" with various people while pondering what to do in the Dominican Republic. When the chips were down, he says, on that now-historic Wednesday evening of April 28—when the decision was made to send in troops—it was a "unanimous decision, about which there was no difference of opinion. . . ."

All this may be reassuring to the President and may reinforce his argument that he was not "impulsive" in dispatching troops. But wouldn't it be even more comforting if someone—anyone—on the top level of the government had stood up and said "no"?



MCCARTNEY

This is not to suggest that the decision, under the circumstances, was wrong, and is not an attempt to make a judgment on its wisdom. But one might think that among men of highly sophisticated and refined intelligence a lone maverick might have cropped up.

If a maverick didn't crop up, maybe it would be wise to go out and hire one—just to get a stimulating argument now and then.

What the President has done is to document the fact that no one on the top level of his administration, or even fairly well down the line, disagreed with the boss on an obviously controversial matter.

And by the President's own description, this includes quite a passle of top and middle-level people. He mentioned Sec. of State Rusk, Defense Sec. McNamara, Under-Sec. of State Ball, and White House staff members McGeorge Bundy and Bill D. Moyers, to start.

THEN he included the chief of the Latin American desk in the State Department, Jack Hood Vaughn, and his experts, plus Deputy Defense Sec. Cyrus Vance and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Beyond that he mentioned all parts of the "country team" in the embassy in the Dominican Republic, from Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett through the CIA director, the head of the U.S. Information Agency and representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

But from all that the President has said about it, no one, in all of this huge group, dissented.

The fact is, of course, that Lyndon B. Johnson is not an easy man to argue with. He doesn't like dissension in the ranks.

Goodness knows what his reaction might be if a middle-level government official should raise his voice in a meeting sometime and say, clearly and unequivocally: "Mr. President—I think you're wrong."

The mind boggles at the thought.

The trouble in Washington, of course, is that the town has a surplus of yes men. That is a commodity here which has never been in short supply. In the government service that's practically the name of the game.

Another common style of federal administrator—not unknown, even on the Cabinet level—is the "yes and no" man. He's a fellow who can

expound for hours on a question and you go away wondering: What did he say? Mr. Johnson doesn't need any more of these.

In a talk at a military reception on the White House lawn recently the President indicated that he'd been thinking about problems in receiving advice.

HE QUOTED a Roman consul in 168 B.C. as saying: "I am not one of those who think that commanders ought at no time to receive advice. On the contrary, I should deem that man more proud than wise who regulated every proceeding by the standards of his own single judgment."

This sounded pretty good until the President finished the quotation. The gist of the rest of it was that a man ought to keep his mouth shut unless he actually gets out and fights—"furnished with a ship, a horse and a tent."

"If he thinks this is too much trouble and prefers the repose of city life to the cause of war," the quotation said, "let him not . . . assume the office of pilot."

Those are pretty tough standards for a would-be presidential advisor to meet before he can speak his mind—in case he disagrees. In the case of the Dominican Republic he'd have to go to Santo Domingo and fire a few shots.

Maybe the President ought to consider relaxing the standards a little.